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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between teacher and student understandings. Subjects consisted of 26 third-grade students, of whom six were chosen for case studies, in a school in a large metropolitan area. All students were Latino, bilingual, and from working class homes. Modified cloze lessons were taught, and three types of data were collected with regard to the lessons: video tapes and field notes of the lessons observed, literacy artifacts, and teacher and student interviews. The focus of the data analysis was to discern how the various participants in the lesson (students, teachers, and ethnographer) understood the activity and the degree to which these understandings were shared across participants. Field notes indicated that the only issue which emerged was that at times the children had difficulty in using the information presented after the blank to judge the meaningfulness of their responses. Literacy artifacts indicated that 93% of all student responses were meaningful. Student and teacher interviews indicated there was a large degree of misunderstanding between the teacher and the case-study students. It was the nature of school as an institution in general, and the lack of authenticity in the lesson in particular, which accounted for the discrepancy between teacher and student understandings. (Four tables of data and two figures are included, and 36 references are attached.) (MG)

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UNDERSTANDING LITERACY LESSONS: DO TEACHERS AND STUDENTS TALK THE SAME LANGUAGE?

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Understanding Literacy Lessons: Do Teachers and Students Talk the Same Language?

In her book, Children's Minds, Margaret Donaldson (1978) shares a story about a young child's confusion during her first day at school. The teacher, in an attempt to learn the names of her students as well as to take attendance, asks the child, "Is your name Laurie Lee?" The child replies, "Yes" and the teacher responds, "Fine, now just sit there for the present time." From an adult perspective, it is clear that the directive to the child is intended to help the teacher take attendance in an orderly fashion. However, the child interprets "present" as a gift, misses the teacher's intention entirely, and returns home in the afternoon fuming about being lied to. In commenting on the child's confusion, Donaldson suggests that if instruction is to have a positive impact, we need to consider how students understand or represent school tasks to themselves.

The need to look at the curriculum from the students' perspective would appear to be particularly important in regards to literacy instruction. Because of the value placed on literacy by our culture, substantial amounts of instructional time are devoted to the development of reading and writing abilities within the early grades. Most lessons are designed to support in a very direct way the attainment of key literacy processes or skills and therefore represent very specific and explicit teacher intentions. Students are expected to apply those processes or skills which are learned in these controlled and supported situations to authentic and independent literacy situations. Of course, in order to make such applications, students must first understand the intended relationship between instructional and nonstructional contexts.

For most of this century, there has been an ongoing debate concerning how literacy ability can best be facilitated. To a large extent, this debate has focused on what is to be the substance of instruction and how this substance is to be presented to the students. Stated somewhat simplistically, advocates of a bottom-up, part-to-whole, skills perspective argue that basic word attack and decoding skills are the foundation of early reading development and need to be mastered by students in initial literacy programs. In contrast, proponents of an transactive, whole-to-part, whole language perspective propose that basic literacy processes or strategies that are used by proficient readers should serve as the foundation for beginning literacy curricula.

While the debate between these two theoretical positions continues, we have failed to consider how the recipients of our instruction--the children--understand their literacy lessons. Given that the intention behind most literacy lessons is to teach the children something which can be used in subsequent encounters with print, regardless of whether these lessons reflect a skills or whole language perspective, it would appear useful to know how students understand these lessons. As Frank Smith (1976) notes, there is a difference between how something is taught and how something is learned. To a large extent both theoretical positions have ignored this difference between teaching and learning. They have simply assumed that teacher beliefs and intentions as reflected in literacy lessons are directly transmitted to, and understood by, the students. Left unexamined is the relationship between teacher and student understandings of their literacy lessons.

It is this relationship between teacher and student understandings which is examined within this article. Specifically, the study focuses on how six third grade students of varying reading proficiencies understood a

key literacy activity. The activity was intended to increase the students' ability to use context clues as they read and was experienced repeatedly by the students throughout the year. Because the research to be reported is part of a much larger ethnographic study (Kucer, 1989), I begin by describing the instructional setting: the students, the teacher, the ethnographer, and the curriculum. The methodology for data collection and analysis is then presented and the relationship between teacher-student understandings discussed. In concluding, I explore the possible reasons for the lack of congruence which was found to exist between student and teacher understandings within this particular classroom setting and propose that a shared understanding about classroom literacy events might best be promoted through the concept of authenticity.

The Setting: Students, Teacher, Ethnographer, and Curriculum

The students. The research was conducted within a third grade classroom in a large metropolitan area. The twenty-six students in the class were Latino, bilingual, and from working class homes. Many of the children had been born in Mexico, though the majority had lived in the United States for most of their lives and had been enrolled at the present school since kindergarten. Linguistically, most, though not all, entered kindergarten speaking predominantly Spanish and were in Spanish literacy programs until the second semester of second grade. At that time, because of the students' skills in oral English and Spanish literacy, formal transition to English literacy was begun. The third grade literacy curriculum was to continue this transition and build upon the English literacy abilities which the students had developed the previous year.

Unfortunately, reading interviews (Burke, 1978), oral reading miscue

analysis, and story retellings (Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987), led to the discovery that most of the students in the classroom had a limited range of strategies which they were able to utilize when interacting with print. Many had developed word recognition and word attack skills; however, except for the additional strategy of skipping, the students lacked alternate strategies for coping with unknown words. For these children, reading was a bottom-up process which consisted largely of sounding out words and little else.

Such a stance toward text came to be developed, it would appear, from the previous basal reading instruction which the children had received in both English and Spanish. The basal programs, as well as the classroom teachers, had emphasized the sound/symbol and word recognition aspect of reading. The materials which were read, the skill sheets which were completed, the textual focus which the teachers emphasized, and the tests which were taken all told the children in a very direct way that the foundation of reading consisted of letters, sounds, and words.

From the twenty-six children in the class, six were selected for case studies. This was done so that the classroom teacher and I could more closely examine and monitor the curriculum and its ongoing effects on the students' literacy development. These six children, three boys and three girls, were chosen because they were highly verbal, proficient in oral English, and represented a range of English literacy abilities: two highly proficient, two moderately proficient, and two nonproficient.

The teacher. Cecilia Silva, the third grade teacher in the study, was originally from Colombia, was bilingual and biliterate in Spanish and English, and middle class in background. For eleven years she had taught elementary school, mostly in bilingual settings, and was finishing her Ph.D. in a language and literacy program at a local university.

Through observations of her teaching, as well as through personal discussions and formal interviews, (DeFord, 1985), it was clear that Cecilia was a whole language advocate. She believed that all instructional reading and writing activities should be meaning focused and that students need to develop a wide range of cognitive strategies if they are to effectively interact with print. While sounding out words is one such strategy, Cecilia believed that effective readers also reread previous portions of text, read subsequent portions of text, generate tentative predictions, and monitor these predictions when encountering unknown lexical items. She wanted her students to develop these strategies as well.

The ethnographer. As the ethnographer, I played several roles within the classroom setting. First, I was Cecilia's major professor within her doctoral program. We had known each other for six years, had collaborated on previous studies and conference presentations, and shared a whole language orientation. Secondly, I played the role of a team member with Cecilia in developing, modifying, and evaluating the literacy curriculum throughout the school year. We discussed the class and curriculum almost daily and worked together in the selection and construction of materials and activities.

While I was an active participant "behind the scenes," when interacting with the children I played the role of a participant observer. I was in the classroom on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings. During this time, I observed and talked with the children, video and audio taped many of the classroom activities, but never engaged in direct instruction or classroom management. Because I am monolingual, all of my interactions with the children were in English. When Cecilia introduced me to the children in September, she simply said that I was a teacher at a local university who was interested in how children learned to read and write and would be in the

classroom throughout the year.

Though I interacted with all of the children in the classroom, the majority of my interactions were with the six case study children. My chair and video camera were situated near their desks--the case study students were grouped together--which allowed me to easily observe, tape, and talk with them about the tasks in which they were engaged.

The curriculum. The school in which the study was conducted grouped students by ability for language arts instruction. This meant that most students left their "homerooms" and went to another teacher for reading and writing instruction. For the entire school, literacy instruction was conducted from 8:30 - 10:45, with a fifteen minute recess for the third grades beginning at 9:45. As previously mentioned, children were placed in this particular classroom because of their need for additional instructional support as they formally transitioned into English literacy.

Our whole language literacy curriculum was divided into four parts: themes, free reading, free writing, and teacher reading. Each day from 8:30-9:45 the students were engaged in integrated activities related to various themes of study. The intention behind all of the activities was to help students develop conceptual knowledge about the topic at hand and to promote ongoing literacy development. Lessons involved art, music, and math as well as oral and written language. Materials came from the sciences, social sciences, and literature and represented a range of discourse types--narrative, expository, poetic, dramatic--and resources--books, magazines, filmstrips, records, movies. When possible, materials in both English and Spanish were included within the curriuclum.

After recess, there was a rotating schedule. On one day, from 10:00 - 10:45, the students engaged in free writing, conferencing, and publishing.

In contrast to the writing assigned during theme time, which focused on the topic under study, in free writing the students selected their own topics and determined which texts to publish. Texts to be published usually involved the children in two conferences, the first focused on the ideas in the text, the second on mechanics. During free writing, students were encouraged and given opportunities to share work in progress as well as published pieces.

On the other day, from 10:00 - 10:20, the teacher read to the children. These readings were usually books, took several weeks to read, and were always theme-related. As with free writing, the children were encouraged to respond to what was being read. Following teacher reading, from 10:20 - 10:45, the children engaged in free reading. Throughout the room were boxes of paperback books and magazines on different topics, representing various discourse modes, and in English and Spanish. The children selected their own reading material and were given time to share what they had read on a regular basis.

Because of our process-orientation and whole language beliefs about literacy and its instruction, as well as the limited range of reading strategies which the children employed, one goal of ours was to help the children develop alternate strategies beyond simply sounding out unknown words. While a number of activities were used to help meet this goal, such as predictable books and reading conferences, the most salient and frequently utilized activity--thirteen times--was a modified cloze strategy lesson (Goodman & Burke, 1980, p. 192; Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987, p. 164). This strategy lesson was taught during theme time, used theme-based materials, and included narratives as well as expositions written in both English and Spanish.

Strategy lessons are instructional activities which are intended to

highlight particular reading processes for which a reader needs support. Strategy lessons make use of whole pieces of discourse and "the material for each strategy lesson is carefully constructed or selected to provide a real, whole language context while focusing on a selected reading strategy" (Goodman & Burke, 1980. p. 31). As illustrated in Figure 1, in any strategy lesson, the generation of meaning is always at the center, with structure (syntactic as well as textual) and graphophonics serving to support the development of this meaning.

Figure 1 about here.

Cecilia and I selected this particular strategy lesson because we believed it effectively highlighted those cognitive processes which the students needed to learn, i.e. use of contextual cues. In fact, I had long been convinced that it was one of the most authentic strategy lessons to have been developed. I thought this because coming to a blank in a text seemed similar to that of encountering an unknown word. Contextual cues must be used in order to maintain the flow of meaning. In addition, the lesson allows for the use of existing texts, thereby avoiding the need to generate texts solely for instructional purposes, such texts often are contrived in nature. As previously mentioned, the modified cloze activity can also easily be embeded within a thematic curriculum through the use of theme-related materials. Therefore, the lesson can be woven into the fabric of the curriculum rather than standing apart in both space and time. Finally, the modified cloze lesson allows students to easily be grouped in various ways so as to support collaborative learning and development.

The cloze lesson was modified in the sense that words were deleted at

points in the text where we felt there was enough contextual information to support the generation of meaningful predictions on the part of the children. Secondly, we were not looking for or expecting the children to generate the exact word which had been deleted. Our intention was that through the use of various context clues and strategies, i.e. rereading previous portions of text, reading on and returning, etc., that meaningful responses would be generated. Finally, in our modified cloze we deleted single as well as groups of words throughout the text. In contrast, traditional cloze usually deletes every fifth word, intends that the exact (or sometimes synonomous) word which had been deleted be generated, and is limited to the deletion of single words. Table 1 contains a modified cloze text (Mayer, 1983) which was used with the children.

Table 1 about here.

The modified cloze lessons were taught either to the entire class or to small groups. When taught to small groups, care was taken to make sure that all case study students were in the same group. The typical pattern of instruction, regardless of group size, was as follows.

1. The teacher gives all students a copy of the text and has them chorally read it, generating responses for the blanks as they read.
2. After the text is read, the teacher returns to the first blank and asks for all of the reponses which were generated. These responses are listed on the chalkboard or overhead projector.
3. The student who provided each response identifies the textual information which was used to generate the response.
4. The other students in the group evaluate the meaningfulness of the

response, though the teacher accepts all responses.

5. After all responses are discussed, the students chorally read the text a second time, putting in those responses which made the most sense.
6. In collaborative pairs, students are given copies of a second text to complete on their own. Responses are directly written on the copies in the blanks. When finished, responses are shared and discussed with other members of the group.

Data Collection

Three types of data were collected throughout the school year in regards to the modified cloze activity: video tapes and field notes of the lessons observed, literacy artifacts, and teacher and student interviews. These various data sources were used because each afforded a different perspective or vantage point on what was happening in the lesson. The video tapes and field notes represented the researcher's and at times the classroom teacher's understanding of the lesson. The literacy artifacts demonstrated how well the students were able to successfully employ the strategies which the lesson was intending to teach. And, the interviews represented the teacher and students' retrospective understanding of the lesson.

Video tapes and field notes. All thirteen modified cloze activities were collaboratively developed by the classroom teacher and the ethnographer. Notes about this collaboration--the selection and modification of text, the grouping of students, the structure of the lesson--were recorded. Five of these modified cloze lessons were observed, videotaped, and field notes taken by the ethnographer. On occasion, the teacher also recorded her reflections about the lessons.

Literacy artifacts. All modified texts and responses which the student generated and recorded directly on the texts, either in groups, collaborative pairs, or individually were collected.

Student and teacher interviews. The teacher and the six case study students were interviewed about four of the modified cloze activities, though interviews concerning other classroom activities were also conducted throughout the year. Interviews were either conducted on the same day on which the activity occurred or the following morning. Interviews were one-on-one, audio taped, and included the modified cloze text(s) and student responses. Following are the dates on which the interviews occurred and the number of times which the teacher and students had experienced this particular literacy activity by that date.

November 17: four previous experiences

January 11: six previous experiences

March 8: twelve previous experiences

March 16: thirteen previous experiences

The teacher and student interviews consisted addressed the following four basic questions:

1. Teacher: What did the children have to do in this activity?
   Student: What did you have to do in this activity?
2. Teacher: Why did you have the children do this activity? What were you trying to teach the children?
   Student: Why did Ms. Silva have you do this activity? What was Ms. Silva trying to teach you?
3. Teacher: What did you want the children to learn from this activity?
   Student: What did you learn from this activity?

4. Teacher: What did you want the children to learn in this activity which would help make them better readers or writers?

Student: Did you learn anything in this activity which will help you to be a better reader or writer? What?

Data Analysis and Results

The focus of the data analysis was to discern how the various participants in the lesson--students, teacher, ethnographer--understood the activity and the degree to which these understandings were shared across participants.

Video tapes and field notes. An analysis of field note entries indicates that the modified cloze activity was addressed in some manner on twelve different days throughout the academic year. Within these twelve entries, twenty-six separate issues related to student understanding and success with the lesson were discussed.

What is significant about the field notes is the clear impression they give of both the ethnographer's and classroom teacher's belief that the students understood and were successful in doing the modified cloze activities. No entry indicates confusion on the part of the children or general patterns of responses to the blanks which were not meaningful. Only one time in my notes do I comment that a child made a response which lacked meaning based upon the information given up to that particular point in the text. The only issue which did emerge was that at times the children had difficulty in using information presented after the blank to judge the meaningfulness of their responses. On occasion, responses made sense up to the sentence containing the blank, but subsequent information rendered them meaningless. Other than this, both Cecilia and I believed that the children

were extremely successful with the activity.

Literacy artifacts. Eleven modified texts containing a total of 202 blanks and 415 student responses were collected. An examination of these responses supports the interpretation which the field notes present. Ninety-three percent of all student responses were meaningful.

An analysis of the seven percent of meaning-disrupting responses reveals three sources for these disruptions. First, as indicated in the field notes, students had difficulty seeing their responses as tentative in nature and in need of ongoing monitoring. They appeared unable to judge their responses in terms of the information which both followed as well as preceded the blanks. There are a number of studies within the existing reading research literature which corraborates this "confirmation bias" (Garrison & Hoskisson, 1989; Klayman & Ha, 1987; Ross & Lepper; Snyder, 1981; Snyder & Swann, 1978).

A second source appears to be related to the syntactic nature of the words deleted. In most cases, deletions focused on nouns and verbs. On occasion, however, adverbs were deleted. All six case study students had difficulty with adverbial deletions. This difficulty is not surprising, given that the students' first language was Spanish and that their English, while fairly developed, was still being fine-tuned.

The final cause of meaning disrupting responses relates to background knowledge. As indicated earlier, the modified cloze activity was done with thematic materials. When the students lacked well developed knowledge about a particular topic, such as reptiles and amphibeans, they would at times generate responses which did not make sense based on the characteristics of the reptile or amphibean being read about. In a sense, these responses demonstrated not so much a lack of ability to use context when reading as

student unfamiliarity with the topic at hand.

Student and teacher interviews. After all interviews were transcribed, a response taxonomy was inductively generated from a total of eighty-seven separate student answers. Table 2 contains the categories and definitions within the taxonomy; sample teacher and student responses for the various categories are presented in Table 3. After the formulation of the taxonomy, all responses were then categorized and quantified; subsequently, response percentages were generated for each category within each question. These numbers and percentages are presented in Table 4.

Tables 2, 3 and 4 about here.

As illustrated in Table 4, except for explanations concerning what was to be done in the modified cloze task (Question 1), there was a large degree of misunderstanding between the teacher and the case study students. While the teacher's focus was on having the students learn to use contextual cues when dealing with unknown words--she gives the same response across questions--the students rarely took the same stance towards the lesson. The students only understood the teacher's intention (Question 2) 16% of the time, understood what she wanted them to learn (Question 3) 0% of the time, and understood how she expected the lesson was to improve their reading (Question 4) 4% of the time. If understandings across these three questions are examined (Summary), teacher-student congruence was only 7%. The teacher and students clearly did not experience these lessons in the same way.

Of even more interest than the lack of teacher-student congruence is how the students actually understood the lessons. As indicated in the Summary category (Questions 3, 4, and 5 combined), the students had no idea

why they were engaged in the activity 10% of the time (3.0). The remaining responses fall within the mismatch category and are almost evenly divided among the six sub-categories: future, task, skill, content, opposite process, general.

Thirteen percent of the students thought the focus of the activity was on preparing them to do a similar task later in the year, in future grades, or with more difficult texts (2.1). As one child put it when asked about the reason for the activity, "We'll do it next year."

Another group of responses within the Summary mismatch category indicate that the students thought the instructional focus was on learning how to put words into blanks; "We learned how to put words in sentences to fill in blanks" (2.2). As compared to the responses which focused on future activities, task responses are here and now as well as activity oriented. Seventeen percent of the students responded in this manner.

As previously noted, a basic reason behind the use of the modified cloze task was to help the students develop alternate reading strategies for dealing with unknown words other than sounding out or skipping. However, as indicated in the Summary skills category (2.3), thirteen percent of the students thought that the teacher was teaching them such literacy skills as learning new words, making words rhyme, and even how to sound out words. This focus was in spite of the fact that the students were encountering blanks and that there were simply no words to learn, rhyme, or sound out.

Less surprising is the students' focus on content; thirteen percent of the responses in the summary concerned the content discussed in the text being read (2.4). Because all modified cloze tasks used material from the theme which the students were currently studying, this concern for content is not surprising. What is surprising, however, especially given the focus on

meaning within the curriuclum, is the fact that the teacher failed to mention content as a purpose for this activity. In discussing this with Cecilia, she explained that learning about the theme was a given for all activities during this part of the curriculum. Therfore, she felt no need to mention it during the interviews.

Though the modified cloze task was a reading activity, students thought the focus was on writing 12% of the time (2.5). These responses were then coded a second time for focus (future, task, skill, content, general). For the most part, students believed that they were being taught how to spell words; "Some words that I don't know how to spell very well."

Finally, 14% of the responses in the Summary category involved general responses related to reading but lacking specificity: "To be a better reader" (2.6). Follow-up questions failed to elicit additional information from the students.

Discussion: Why the Mismatch?

Given the students' success with the modified cloze activity, and their ability to articulate what the task involved, one is immediately struck by the lack of correspondence between the teacher's and the students' views of the lessons. It is clear that the ability to successfully engage in an activity is no guarantee that the purpose or intent of the activity will be understood. A typical school reponse to this lack of understanding might be to simply tell the children why they were engaged in the task, with the belief that this would take care of the problem. Cecilia and I thought just such a thing in November after the first set of interviews revealed this discrepency between teacher and students. At that point in the curriculum, the students had experienced the modified cloze lesson four times and Cecilia

had never explicitly told them the purpose behind the lesson. When interviewed after their fourth experience with the activity, 72% of the student responses mismatched with the teacher across intention, learning, and literacy improvement (Summary category).

At the time of the second interview (January 11), the students had two additional experiences with the lesson. However, in these lessons, the teacher had discussed with the children her purpose for having them engage in the activity. Included in these discussions was a direct link to the reading of unaltered texts, such as during theme and free reading time. Students were told that coming to an unknown word was like coming to a blank and that context and the various strategies which they used in the modified lesson could be applied to the unknown word. In addition, during the month of December the teacher and students had collaboratively created a reading chart which listed strategies for dealing with unknown words. Included on this chart were the following options: reread (the sentence or paragraph before it), read on (the rest of the sentence or paragraph or story and then come back to it), look at the pictures, talk with a friend, put in something which makes sense, skip it, try and sound it out. This chart was duplicated and given to the students so that they could easily refer to it when engaged in independent reading activities.

Finally, during theme time, students frequently read trade books related to the topic under study. Following the reading the students were brought together in small book-response groups. In these groups students discussed such things as what they liked and disliked about the text. Included in the discussions was an identification of "things" which were not understood and the application of various strategies for figuring them out.

Even with these charts, discussions, and teacher attempts to link the

activity to real world reading, the next set of interviews revealed an even greater lack of shared understanding between teacher and students: 94% of the student summary responses failed to match with the teacher's. On March 8, after six more experiences and discussions concerning the purpose of the lesson, the teacher and students mismatched 86% of the time. Finally, on March 16, with one additional experience with the lesson, the mismatch was 83%. Telling or discussing with the students the purpose of the activity had little if any effect on student understanding.

In attempting to make sense out of this data, the teacher and I then postulated that perhaps those students who were the most proficient readers would understand the lesson as we had intended. It would be the poor readers who caused the data to indicate more of a discrepency between teacher and student than there really was. In the matches and mismatches across the four interviews for the two most and least proficient readers, we found only a slight difference. The more proficient students mismatched on average 72% of the time; nonproficient students mismatched 78% of the time on average. Being a good or poor reader appears to account for little of the mismatch.

Another possible reason for the apparent lack of student understanding might be due to the metalinguistic nature of the interviews. This would suggest that the students were able to understand the lesson as intended, i.e. to learn to use context when encountering unknown words in the reading of unaltered texts, but were simply unable to articulate their understanding. However, the case study students were highly verbal--this had been one criteria used to select them--and possessed all of the necessary vocabulary needed to discuss the lesson. Also, the reading process chart which had been developed with the children and which was frequently reviewed and discussed reflected both the language as well as the concepts behind the lesson. The

book-response groups, with the discussion and application of various strategies for dealing with unknown words, gave additional support to the modified cloze lessons. An examination of the language used in the only match between teacher-student intentions (Table 3) demonstrates that linguistic facility was clearly not the cause for the lack of correspondence between teacher and student understandings.

Rather than lack of success with the activity, or inability to verbalize the connection between the task and other reading experiences, I believe that it is the nature of school as an institution in general, and the lack of authenticity in the lesson in particular, which accounts for the discrepency between teacher and student understandings.

The nature of school. To a large extent, elementary school literacy tasks have little relevance or relationship to life outside of the classroom walls. It is only in the school environment that the child finds language which is segmented, stripped of meaning, and taken as an object of study. While worksheets, flashcards, phonic charts, and lists of comprehension questions may be called reading in school, such tasks have little relationship to literacy events in noninstructional settings. In a sense, many school activities are "deviant" in that they fail to reflect normative use of, and behaviors with, print within the home or the wider culture.

This lack of correspondence between school and real world literacy events may ultimately force children to stop looking for school-world connections. Reading and writing activities come to be viewed as self-contained events, as "things we do in school," with little relevance to other experiences in the children's lives. I have vivid memories of my fourth grade teacher who had been trained in the "scientific" approach towards reading instruction. She frequently distributed worksheets to complete which

had us practice and master various isolated reading skills. To this day I can still remember puzzling over what "subject" those worksheets represented.

The children in this study had also experienced such reading instruction in first and second grade. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that they used the same schema which they have built for previous schooling activities as a base for interpreting our literacy instruction. This is the case even when the instruction contradicts previous instructional paradigms, for understanding is determined not only by the instructional event itself, but also by what the student brings to the event.

The future, task, and skill categories in the Summary section of Table 4 supports such a conclusion. Thirteen percent of the responses focus on doing the task because it will be done again in the future. Seventeen percent of the responses relate to doing the task just for the sake of doing it and thirteen percent of the responses focus on doing the activity to learn particular word level skills. In total, forty-three percent of the responses relate to a traditional schooling schema. Such a view certainly reflects the "stuff" of many schooling experiences and appears to exert a powerful influence on student perception of school literacy tasks. This influence is particularly noticeable in the skills category which represents those responses in which the students thought they were learning how to sound out words which in fact did not exist.

Lesson authenticity. Somewhat related to the nature of school discussion is that of lesson authenticity. In many respects, the modified cloze lesson was an inauthentic task and as devient as many of the skill lessons which these children had experienced in their first two years of schooling. Even with the lesson's use whole texts, thematic content, and various contextual cues, where else but in school would a child experience

reading a text with blanks scattered throughout it? Perhaps it should not be surprising that the students were unable to discern the link between what they had done in the modified cloze tasks and the reading of such material as library books. Library books contain connected discourse.

Some students, in fact, did attempt to link the activity to library book reading. Several times throughout the year students would tell me during the interview sessions that the activity would help them read library books. When I asked them how, noting that library books did not have blanks in them, the students would look puzzled, shrug their shoulders, and say they did not know. While the teacher had discussed the lesson as something which would help them to more effectively read library books, the students had failed to make more than a surface level connection.

Authenticity as the Basis for Instruction

Cecilia Silva and I began our classroom-based research as whole language advocates. We believed that all classroom activities should be meaning-centered and that a literacy curriculum should help students develop a range of cognitive strategies for generating meaning from print. Such a belief reflects a basic tenet of whole language (Altwerger, Edelsky, & Flores, 1987; Atwell & Rhodes, 1984; Goodman, 1986) and there are numerous publications which set forth various strategy lessons which can be used within whole language curricula (Cochrane, et al, 1984; Goodman & Burke, 1980; Harste & Short, 1988; Kucer & Harste, in press; Gilles, et al, 1988; Newman, 1985; Watson 1987). In these lessons, the use of cognitive strategies--as opposed to skills--and the generation of meaning serves as the cornerstone or foundation for student involvement. I will call this characteristic of strategy lessons cognitive authenticity in that the

instruction and materials allow students to engage in those cognitive processes which are utilized by proficient readers and writers. The curriculum which Cecilia and I developed, and the modified cloze activity in particular, certainly reflected cognitive authenticity.

Another aspect of the whole language paradigm is what I will term developmental authenticity. Developmentally authentic instruction engages students in activities which reflect the manner in which cognitive and socio-cultural processes are developed. Students have the opportunity to work collaboratively with more capable peers as well as with the teacher. Such collaboration is grounded on the Vygotskian belief that cognitive processes develop from socially supported situations (interpsychological) to individual and independent situations (intrapsychological) (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985a, 1985b). In a whole language curriculum, students first encounter and use literacy processes in collaborative contexts before they are applied independently.

Collaboration, because it provides numerous demonstrations of how the reading and writing systems operate, supports student construction of the literacy system through data gathering and hypothesis generating, testing, and modifying. Most existing strategy lessons reflect this kind of authenticity. In Cecilia's classroom, the students always experienced the modified cloze activity in collaborative situations and were supported in their use of contextual cues by more capable peers and by Cecilia herself.

There is a third characteristic of authenticity which I believe both our curriuclum in particular and whole language in general has tended to ignore or only to acknowledge in the most general of ways, that of socio-cultural authenticity. By socio-cultural authenticity I mean the way in which individuals within their society, culture, or discipline use literacy

to mediate their interactions with their world. For example, the preschool literacy research has documented how young children encounter different uses of print depending on their cultural and economic setting (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984; Taylor, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). Sociolinguistics, such as Heath (1983), Wells (1986), Schieffelin and Cochran-Smith (1984), and Anderson and Stokes (1984) have demonstrated that literacy use in both function and form varies across ethnic, cultural, and economic groups. More recently, the research on discourse communities and ways of knowing has further extended our understanding of how socialization within various disciplines or social groups influences the manner in which literacy is used to both structure as well as generate knowledge (Barabas, 1990; Belenky, 1986; Bruffee, 1986; Eisner, 1985; Nystrand, 1989). This socio-cultural knowledge needs to be taken into account when literacy curricula are constructed.

In order to be socio-culturally authentic, classroom instruction and materials must reflect real world or normative literacy events and engage students in fuctional, purposeful, and organic activities. While the modified cloze activity reflects cognitive as well as developmental authenticity, the socio-cultural dimension is missing. There is not a nonschool environment of which I am aware in which readers encounter blank lines throughout a piece of discourse. In a real sense, or at least in a socio-cultural sense, the activity violates established discourse norms. Given this fact, it should not be surprising that students had difficulty in perceiving the link between an activity which was intended to improve their reading and their reading of unaltered texts. And, there is little reason to believe that in the future that these students will suddenly discover and spontaneously apply to unaltered texts what they did in this particular

strategy lesson.

I said that Cecilia and I began our research as whole language advocates. We left the research as whole language advocates as well. However, we now have a more radicalized view of what a whole language curriculum should look like. While the notion of authenticity has certainly been discussed by various whole language theoreticians (Edelsky, 1986; Goodman, 1986), most existing strategy lessons tend to focus primarily on the generation of meaning, i.e. on cognitive authenticity. This focus is understandable, given the history of meaning-stripped literacy instruction which has dominated our schools during most of this century. However, as we discovered in our own research, it is possible to have cognitive authenticity--and even developmental authenticity--without socio-cultural authenticity being present. And it is this lack of socio-cultural authenticity which I believe causes many students not to see the applicablity of school literacy activities to wider contexts. To use a rather dated behavioristic term, students are not able to transfer knowledge from one situation to another when the first is inauthentic and the second is authentic.

Earlier, I discussed the key characteristics of strategy lessons as depicted in Figure 1. I would like to propose that the three characteristics of authenticity--cognitive, developmental, socio-cultural--and literacy events be substituted for strategy lessons. As represented in Figure 2, literacy events would be classroom activities which had the generation of meaning as their focus. Such activities would be collaborative as needed and encourage the active construction of the literacy system through hypothesis generating and testing. Finally, the literacy events would engage students in reading and writing tasks which they might encounter beyond the classroom walls.

Figure 2 about here.

Using all three dimensions of authenticity--cognitive, developmental, socio-cultural--as the basis from which to generate instructional activities, we can begin to bridge the gap which so frequently exists between school and home. When all three dimensions of authenticity are used to develop school-based literacy activities, the very issue of transfer becomes irrelevant. There is nothing to transfer because authentic literacy activities parallel or replicate real-world literacy events.

In order to develop such activities, however, three things are required. The first requirement is for a more thoughtful consideration of how humans use literacy to mean as well as to know in real-world contexts. Fortunately, as the previously cited references indicate, there is currently a considerable amount of research being done in this area. The second requirement is to build curricula which reflect these contexts. This will be a more formidable task. While such curricula would be meaning-based to be sure, they also would not violate text and context. That is, students would encounter and use written language as it is encountered and used by the society at large. Finally, there is the requirement to more fully appreciate how students understand those literacy lessons which are intended to directly facilitate reading and writing development. Listening to student reflections will provide the food which is necessary for us to begin to do likewise. Our reflection, however, would not be on what we currently believe--there is plenty of that already happening within the profession--but rather would involve a reflection on the authenticity of what we give students to read, to write, and to learn.

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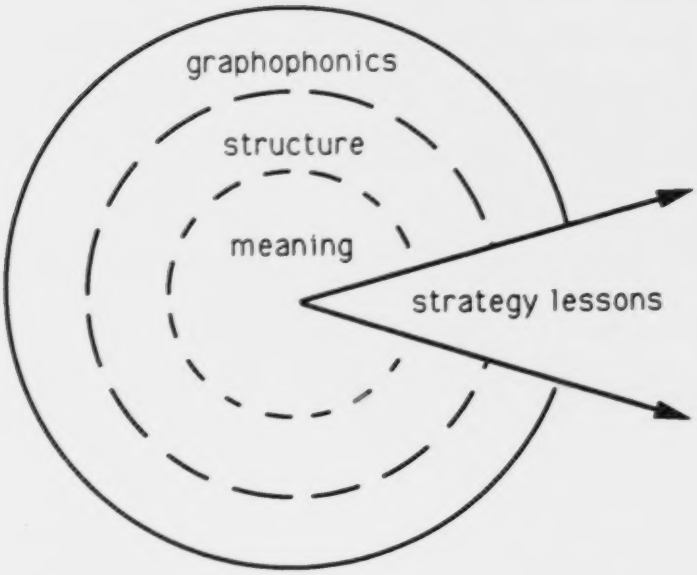

Figure 1. Whole language strategy lessons.

I Was So Mad
by Mercer Mayer

I wanted to keep
some frogs in
the bathtub but
Mom wouldn't
let me.

I was so mad.

I wanted to play
with my little sister's
dollhouse but
Dad wouldn't
let me.

I was so mad.

I wanted to play
hide and seek
in the clean sheets
but Grandma said,
"No, you can't."

I was so _____.

I wanted to water the _____
but Grandpa said,
"No, you can't."

So I decided to
decorate the _____
but Grandpa said,
"No, you can't
do that, either."

Was I ever mad.

Dad said, "Why don't you
play in the _____."

I didn't want to do that.

Mom said, "Why don't
you play on
the slide.

I didn't want to do that,
either. I was too _____.

I wanted to practice
my _____ show, instead.
But Mom said, "No, you can't."

I wanted to _____ the goldfish
but Mom said, "Leave the
goldfish alone."

"You won't let me do _____
I want to do, "I said.
"I guess I'll run away."

That's how mad I was.

So I packed my wagon
with my favorite toys.

And I packed a bag of _____
to eat on the way.

Then I walked out the front
door. But my friends were
going to the park to play
ball. "Can you come, too?"
they asked.

Can I go?

And Mom _____ I could.

I'll run away tomorrow...

...if I'm still so mad.

Table 1. Sample modified cloze text.

1.0 match: the focus of the student matches the focus of the teacher.

2.0 mismatch: the focus of the student does not match the focus of the teacher.

2.1 **future:** the focus is on doing the task so that it can be done with harder texts or in subsequent grades.

2.2 **task:** the focus is on doing the task correctly.

2.3 **skill:** the focus in on learning language parts, forms, or conventions.

2.4 **content:** the focus is on learning the thematic content expressed in the activity.

2.5 **opposite process:** the focus is on the opposite process; i.e. a focus on reading rather than writing; a focus on writing rather than reading. *

2.6 **general:** the focus is on giving a general rather than a specific or particular response; i.e. the activity helped me read or write better.

3.0 unknown: the focus is on not having insights into the activity.

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* Responses labled opposite process are always double coded, indicating the focus of the opposite process, i.e. future, task, skill, content, general.

Table 2. Student response taxonomy.

Question 1: Task Explanation

Teacher: The students were asked to read through the text and to generate a word for the blank which made sense.

1.0 Match: We were to read all of the sentences and put in words that made sense.

2.0 Mismatch: None

Question 2: Teacher Intention

Teacher: To help students learn to use contextual cues for dealing with unknown words when reading. To support the development of strategies beyond "sounding it out."

1.0 Match: It you don't know a word you can read back, skip it, or start all over again.

2.0 Mismatch:

- 2.1 Future: We'll do it next year.
- 2.2 Task: Put word, make up word to put on lines in the book.
- 2.3 Skill: To make words rhyme.
- 2.4 Content: Teach us about snakes, crocodiles, and alligators.
- 2.5 Opposite Process: Learn how to write books.
- 2.6 General: So we could learn to read better.

Question 3: Student Learning

Teacher: Students learn to use contextual cues for dealing with unknown words when reading. Students develop strategies beyond "sounding it out."

1.0 Match: None

2.0 Mismatch:

- 2.1 Future: Teachers teach us this because we might have books with lines in them.
- 2.2 Task: How to put words in the line.
- 2.3 Skill: Learning more words.
- 2.4 Content: Snakes eat bugs. They can help around the farm.
- 2.5 Opposite Process: Some words that I don't know how to spell very well.
- 2.6 General: How to be a better reader.

Question 4: Literacy Improvement

Teacher: Students learn to use contextual cues for dealing with unknown words when reading. Students develop strategies beyond "sounding it out."

1.0 Match: We can skip words we don't know and then read them again.

2.0 Mismatch:

- 2.1 Future: If you get a book that has lines and no words put in a word or make up a word.
- 2.2 Task: Use words in sentences to fill in blanks.
- 2.3 Skill: Learn to try to sound out hard words.
- 2.4 Content: Baby lizards are very small. Can use this when I write about lizards.
- 2.5 Opposite Process: Writing.
- 2.6 General: To be a better reader.

Table 3. Samples of teacher and student understandings.

Question 1: Task Explanation / 18 responses
- 1.0 match: 18 / 100%
- 2.0 mismatch: 0 / 0%

Question 2: Teacher Intention / 25 responses
- 1.0 match: 4 / 16%
- 2.0 mismatch: 19 / 76%
  - 2.1 future: 7 / 28%
  - 2.2 task: 5 / 20%
  - 2.3 skill: 2 / 8%
  - 2.4 content: 1 / 4%
  - 2.5 opposite process: 1 / 4%
  - 2.6 general: 3 / 12%
- 3.0 unknown: 2 / 8%

Question 3: Student Learning / 20 responses
- 1.0 match: 0
- 2.0 mismatch: 20 / 100%
  - 2.1 future: 1 / 5%
  - 2.2 task: 6 / 30%
  - 2.3 skill: 2 / 10%
  - 2.4 content: 7 / 35%
  - 2.5 opposite process: 1 / 5%
  - 2.6 general: 3 / 15%
- 3.0 unknown: 0

Question 4: Literacy Improvement / 24 responses
- 1.0 match: 1 / 4%
- 2.0 mismatch: 18 / 75%
  - 2.1 future: 1 / 4%
  - 2.2 task: 1 / 4%
  - 2.3 skill: 5 / 21%
  - 2.4 content: 1 / 4%
  - 2.5 opposite process: 6 / 25%
  - 2.6 general: 4 / 17%
- 3.0 unknown: 5 / 21%

Summary Across Intention, Learning, and Improvement / 69 responses
- 1.0 match: 5 / 7%
- 2.0 mismatch: 54 / 78%
  - 2.1 future: 9 / 13%
  - 2.2 task: 12 / 17%
  - 2.3 skill: 9 / 13%
  - 2.4 content: 9 / 13%
  - 2.5 opposite process: 8 / 12%
  - 2.6 general: 10 / 14%
- 3.0 unknown: 7 / 10%

Table 4. Student response summary.

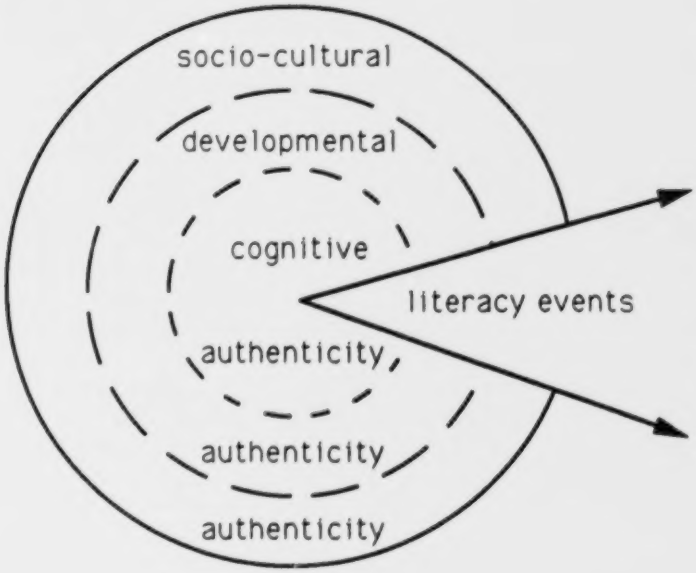

Figure 2. Whole language literacy events.